

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 SP-02 L-01

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R 161622Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0783

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

CINC EUR VAHINGEN

CINC USAFE RAMSTEIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 09649

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, OCLR, GW, UK, UL

SUBJECT: FRG SUCCESSFULLY DOWNPLAYS U-2 CRASH

REFS: (A) BONN 8709 (NOTAL), (B) BONN 3345 (NOTAL),
(C) LONDON 8343

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE CRASH OF A U-2 AIRCRAFT IN THE FRG
COULD EASILY HAVE POSED AN INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEM
FOR THE FRG OR EVEN RAISED PROBLEMS BETWEEN OUR TWO
GOVERNMENTS. THANKS TO THE FINE COOPERATION THE EMBASSY
RECEIVED FROM THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF DEFENSE (FMOD),
BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE CRASH, NEITHER EVENTUALITY
OCCURRED. INSTEAD, THE STORY QUICKLY DROPPED OUT OF THE
LOCAL MEDIA AND WAS NEVER DISCUSSED IN PARLIAMENT.
END SUMMARY

1. THE OVERFLIGHT REQUEST WAS MADE TO THE POLICY AND
PLANS SECTION OF THE FMOD (I.E., THE EQUIVALENT OF ISA).
THAT OFFICE RECOGNIZED HOW SENSITIVE U-2 FLIGHTS OVER
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FEDERAL TERRITORY MIGHT BECOME. THE OFFICER WITH WHOM

THE SUBJECT WAS FIRST BROACHED SUGGESTED, HALF JOKINGLY BUT HALF SERIOUSLY, THAT THE U.S. SIMPLY GO AHEAD AND MAKE THE FLIGHTS WITHOUT TELLING ANYONE HERE IN GERMANY ABOUT IT. WHEN WE PERSISTED, THE FMOD DECIDED TO HANDLE THE OVERFLIGHT CLEARANCE IN A SPECIAL MANNER. AS THE FMOD REQUESTED, THE FONOFF WAS NOT EVEN INFORMED OF THE PROPOSED FLIGHTS (REF B AND PREVIOUS). MOREOVER, THE OFFICE NORMALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR FLIGHT CLEARANCES IN THE FMOD, THE LUFTWAFFE, WAS LIKEWISE NOT INFORMED. KNOWLEDGE OF THE AFFAIR WAS KEPT IN A NARROW CHAIN OF COMMAND BEGINNING WITH THE POLICY AND PLANS SECTION OF THE FMOD AND GOING UP TO STATE SECRETARY MANN (AND PERHAPS HIGHER).

2. THE CRASH OCCURRED ON CORPUS CHRISTI DAY, A GERMAN NATIONAL HOLIDAY. AN EMBOFF INFORMED THE FMOD'S DUTY OFFICER OF THE CRASH AND HE IN TURN INFORMED THE FMOD'S PRESS SPOKESMAN. THE FMOD PRESS SPOKESMAN DECIDED TO REFER ALL PRESS INQUIRIES TO THE EMBASSY AND TO THE U.S. MILITARY RATHER THAN HIMSELF USING THE LANGUAGE OF THE U.S. PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT. THE RESULT, OF COURSE, WAS THE SAME.

3. THE NEXT DAY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PRESS SPOKESMAN AND HIS DEFENSE MINISTRY COLLEAGUE WERE READY TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CRASH AT A REGULAR PRESS BRIEFING. THEY BOTH STATED THAT THE PLANE HAD FLOWN INTO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF ALLIED RESERVED RIGHTS. THEY SAID THAT THERE EXISTS A WELL-ESTABLISHED PROCEDURE FOR THIS KIND OF OVERFLIGHT RIGHTS AND THAT SUCH FLIGHTS ARE AN EVERYDAY OCCURRENCE. THE DEFENSE MINISTRY SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT THE RECONNAISSANCE PLANE HAD BEEN FLYING AT A VERY HIGH ALTITUDE ON A MISSION TO TEST NEW NAVIGATIONAL INSTRUMENTS. IN THIS CONNECTION HE REFERRED TO THE STATEMENT BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

4. THE FACT THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD REFERRED TO THE ESOTERIC AREA OF ALLIED RESERVED RIGHTS IN ITS STATEMENT SERVED TO DAMPEN PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE AFFAIR.

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SO DID THE LOW-KEY WAY THE GERMAN PRESS SPOKESMAN HANDLED THE MATTER. WHILE GERMAN NEWSPAPERS DID PICK UP THE GETLER ARTICLE FROM THE MAY 30 WASHINGTON POST, EVEN THIS WAS NOT ENOUGH TO KEEP THE STORY ALIVE. PRESS INTEREST WAS A TWO-DAY AFFAIR.

5. VARIOUS OFFICES IN THE GERMAN FMOD WERE SOMEWHAT UPSET THAT THEY HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF THE U-2

FLIGHTS BEFORE THEY TOOK PLACE. THE EMBASSY RECEIVED SEVERAL INQUIRIES ASKING THROUGH WHICH OFFICE THE U.S. HAD OBTAINED APPROVAL FOR THE OVERFLIGHTS. ALL SUCH INQUIRIES WERE DIRECTED TO THE POLICY AND PLANS DIVISION OF THE FMOD. THAT OFFICE TOLD US THAT IT HAD NO

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DIFFICULTY IN SHOWING THAT THE SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOLLOWED HAD PROPER HIGH LEVEL AUTHORIZATION.

6. A RECENT INQUIRY TO THE FMOD TO SEE WHETHER OR NOT THE FRG SHARED THE UK'S BELIEF IN THE NEED FOR A MORE POINTED AND FULLER RESPONSE THAN THAT CONTEMPLATED IN THE AGREED PRESS GUIDANCE (REF C) RECEIVED A NEGATIVE ANSWER. THE FMOD SAID IT FELT ITSELF UNDER NO PRESSURE FROM EITHER THE BUNDESTAG OR THE PRESS. WHEN ASKED IF THE FMOD WERE SATISFIED THAT THE FRG HAD RECEIVED SUFFICIENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLASSIFIED ASPECTS OF THE FLIGHT, THE ANSWER WAS IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. PARENTHETICALLY, OUR FMOD CONTACT NOTED THAT FULL DETAILS ABOUT THE ADVANCED LOCATION STRIKE SYSTEM (ALSS) HAD APPEARED IN

AVIATION WEEK LONG BEFORE THE GETLER STORY WAS PUBLISHED.

7. COMMENT: THAT PART OF THE FRG'S PRESS STATEMENT WHICH CLAIMED THAT THE U-2 FLIGHT TOOK PLACE UNDER AUTHORITY OF THE ALLIED RESERVED RIGHTS WAS SOMEWHAT DISINGENUOUS. IN A CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBOFF, AN OFFICER IN THE POLICY AND PLANS SECTION OF THE FMOD CLAIMED THAT THESE
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ALLIED RESERVED RIGHTS ONLY CONCERNED AIRCRAFT BASED IN THE FRG AND NOT THOSE OVERFLYING FRG TERRITORY FROM AIRFIELDS IN COUNTRIES LIKE THE UK. WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS A JUSTIFIABLE INTERPRETATION OF ALLIED RESERVED RIGHTS, THE U.S. COULD ARGUE THAT THE FLIGHT CAME UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT. YET AT NO TIME WAS IT NECESSARY TO GET INTO AN ARGUMENT OVER THE LEGALITIES OF THE SITUATION. THE U.S. WOULD NOT HAVE WANTED TO MAKE THESE POLITICALLY-CHARGED FLIGHTS OVER FEDERAL TERRITORY IF THE FRG OBJECTED, AND SO WE ASKED PERMISSION WHETHER OR NOT WE WERE REQUIRED TO DO SO. IN LINE WITH THE USUAL FRG POLICY OF COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. IN DEFENSE MATTERS UNLESS SPECIFIC GERMAN INTERESTS MAKE SUCH COOPERATION INFEASIBLE, THE FMOD FOR ITS PART AGREED TO THE FLIGHTS AND HELD THE MATTER CLOSELY. WHEN THE CRASH OCCURRED AND THE MATTER COULD NOT BE KEPT UNDER WRAPS, EXPERT GERMAN HANDLING SUCCESSFULLY DOWNPLAYED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AFFAIR TO THE POINT WHERE PUBLIC INTEREST QUICKLY EVAPORATED. END COMMENT
CASH

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